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Air Force Times



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30 Mar 06

Nuclear weapons operations to be consolidated

Associated Press

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. — The Air Force is consolidating its nuclear weapons operations at its new Nuclear Weapons Center on Kirtland Air Force Base.

“It’s a great advantage of having it here,” said the director of the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Directorate, Col. Greg Foraker, who will head the center. “We consider Kirtland the nuclear center of the world.”

The center, which opens Friday, will be in the middle of a state that has made the most important contributions to nuclear science, he said.

The new center won’t mean additional jobs. The Air Force simply moved resources to a single area closer to other agencies that work with nuclear weapons, Foraker said.

“What we’ve found is ... it would be more efficient to have a single organization that other organizations can come to and get answers,” Foraker said.

The world’s first atomic bomb was tested at Trinity Site in southern New Mexico in July 1945, after being developed under the top secret Manhattan Project in Los Alamos. Today, both Los Alamos and Sandia national laboratories in New Mexico work on making sure the U.S. nuclear stockpile is reliable.

The Air Force is responsible for maintenance and security.

Among other things, Air Force personnel schedule maintenance, switch out parts, coordinate transportation and identify any problems with weapons, Foraker said.

Information from: The Albuquerque (N.M.) Tribune